

**THE GENUS *ABANTIS* (LEPIDOPTERA: HESPERIIDAE):
SOME ADDITIONAL CENTRAL AFRICAN RECORDS**

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THE REVISION by Collins and Larsen (1994) of the *Abantis bismarcki* group of skipper butterflies prompts me to put on record the data from my own African collection and notes.

While *Abantis bamptoni* was undoubtedly rare during my time in Zambia (1947-71), *A. zambesiaca* and *A. venosa* were both locally common, with *A. paradisea* occurring only occasionally.

Abantis bamptoni

I have two specimens, both female. The first, relatively fresh, was taken on the 9th February 1954, in woods at Mwinilunga Government Station, in the far north-west of Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia). I have a note that it rests on the upperside of leaves with wings open, in shaded woodland. This specimen is illustrated in Fig. 5, Plate C.

The second specimen was taken on 27th May 1964, in riverine forest at Isombo, near Kalene Hill, in the extreme north-west of Mwinilunga District. This was well after the end of the wet season, and the specimen was very old and damaged.

Otherwise, I had never seen this species in my five years in Mwinilunga, nor anywhere else in Zambia, even though the foodplant, *Uapaca kirkiana*, is very widespread.

Other *Abantis* species

In those days, the late Mr C.M.N. White MBE, in collaboration with Dr C.B. Cottrell FRES (then a student), and myself, had compiled and periodically updated a draft *Check List of the Butterflies of Northern Rhodesia*, which included 122 species of skipper (at least 12 more have been recorded subsequently).

In this list, *A. bismarcki* was recorded from Mwinilunga, Kabompo (immediately to the south), and the Kalungwishi river (in Kawambwa District in the Luapula catchment).

All these specimens are likely to be referable to *A. bamptoni*, as also two mentioned by White as being in the BMNH, from Solwezi and Mpika, under *A. arctomarginata*.

Of the 14 other African species of *Abantis* described by Evans (1937), five were recorded from Zambia:

Abantis tettensis Hopffer, 1855. Collected by Cottrell at Lusaka.

Abantis zambesiaca Westwood, 1874 (Fig. 6, Plate C). My own specimens of this attractive bluish species are from Mwinilunga, dated March 1951. I

also recorded it from four other sites around the district, dated 7th April, mid-September, 17th November and 5th December.

Elsewhere, I found it at Mumbwa, west of Lusaka on 22nd December 1956, and on 15th March 1957, where it was common on a lantana hedge; on 17th April 1957, in the Chisamba Forest Reserve, north of Lusaka; and at Ngwerere Hill, near Lusaka on 8th September. It can probably be regarded as widespread and common on the plateau, over the northern part of the country (1200-1300 metres altitude).

Abantis paradisea Butler, 1870 (Fig. 6, Plate C). My own specimens are from Mumbwa, taken on a lantana hedge on 22nd December 1956, and from Sumbu, at the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, on 17th May 1969. White comments briefly, "widespread and common". While this may be true in the extreme south, in my experience it occurs only sparsely on the main Zambian plateau.

Abantis lucretia Druce 1909, ssp. *lofu* Neave, 1910. The type is in the Oxford Collection from Northern Rhodesia (Evans, 1937, p.54), and seems to be the only known specimen.

Neave collected it in a patch of dense forest on the plateau between the Lofu River and Lake Tanganyika, on 24th August 1908, latitude 9°S, in the extreme north-east of Zambia.

Later maps show the name of the river as Lufubu, a fairly common river name. This may have led to confusion, because this particular Lufubu River is nowhere near Lake Bangweulu (not Lake Benguela).

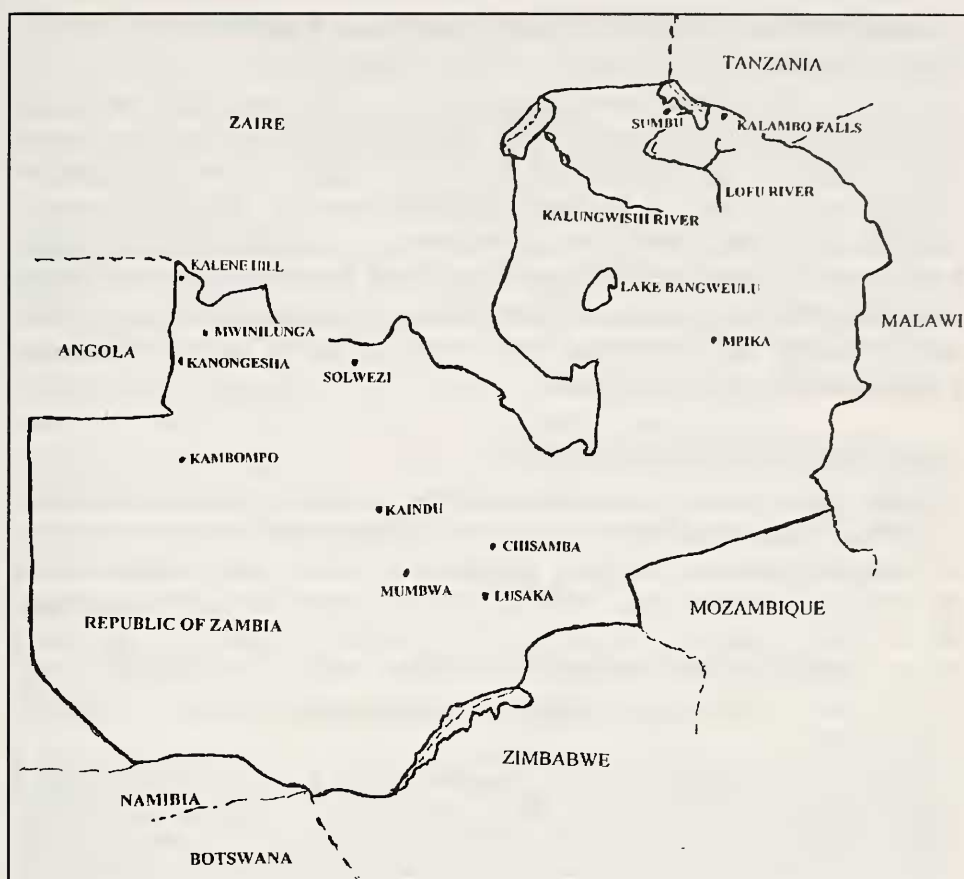
On the other hand, the putative female of this subspecies, now recognised as *A. bamptoni*, was collected by Neave to the east of the Lake.

Abantis venosa Trimen, 1889 (Fig. 6, Plate C). My specimens are from Ikelenge, north-west Mwinilunga, on 30th March 1952; Chombwa, near Mumbwa, on 15th March 1967; form *fulva* from Ngwerere Hill, near Lusaka, on 8th September 1968; form *vidua* from Kanongesha, in western Mwinilunga, on 7th December 1951.

It was common in December at other sites in Mwinilunga District. I also found it in the Chisamba Forest Reserve, north of Lusaka, on 15th April 1965; at Kalambo Falls, in the far north near Lake Tanganyika, on 14th April 1967; and at Kaindu, north Mumbwa, where it was numerous on patches of dung on 12th January 1957.

White classes it as widespread and common.

The latitude of all records lies between 8° and 16°S, and the altitude mainly between 1,200 and 1,300 metres. The attached map indicates the approximate position of the localities mentioned. All species except *A. lucretia* are illustrated in Pennington (1978) and Lewis (1973).



Notes on the illustrations

Fig. 5, Plate C. *A. bamptoni*, female from Mwinilunga, Zambia, ii.1954 (R.C. Dening coll.).

Fig. 6, Plate C. Top left: *A. bamptoni*, as Fig. 5. Top right: *A. zambesiaca*, male from Mwinilunga, Zambia, iii.1951. Bottom left: *A. paradisea*, female from Mumbwa, Zambia, xii.1956. Bottom right: *A. venosa*, male from Ikelenge, Mwinilunga, Zambia, iii.1951. (All R.C. Dening coll.)

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